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THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF RELIGION

CHARLES A. ELLWOOD
University of Missouri

It ought to be possible in this twentieth century for the scientific man to believe in religion in the same way in which he believes in education: not half-heartedly and quizzically, but positively and constructively. Just as there are many metaphysical questions which can be raised concerning education, which admittedly cannot yet be given final answers, but which, nevertheless, the scientific man does not concern himself about but goes on with the work of education as if they were settled, so, too, there are metaphysical questions concerning religion to which as yet no one would pretend that final answers could be given, but which need not hinder the most scientific-minded man from taking a practical and constructive interest in religious activities. Our faith in education, for example, as being able to shape, more or less, the destiny of the individual and of society implies that this is not a rigid universe, held in the iron grasp of blind forces acting even in the most distant past. Education, in other words, implies not only a modifiable human nature and human society, but also that such modifications can be intelligently planned and executed; in short, that consciousness in the highest form of which we know, the human reason, can and does control, to some extent, human life. Now no one thinks that it is necessary to demonstrate this metaphysical view before one can have a practical faith in the

individual and social efficacy of education. Indeed, it is highly probable that some of the most enthusiastic advocates of education at present might question the metaphysical implications involved in our faith in education as a controlling and reconstructive agency in human life, if such implications were pointed out to them. Nevertheless, when it came to deciding on any practical educational matter, they would not let metaphysical doubts, if they were thoroughly sane, interfere with their practical attitude toward educational policies. They would continue, in other words, to act as though they believed that human life was plastic and modifiable through human intelligence and reason.

Now the case should not be different with religion, and it probably would not be were it not for the fact that, while our educational activities contain only implications of a metaphysical nature, our religious activities seemingly depend directly upon certain metaphysical beliefs, such as the beliefs in God, in the soul, and in personal responsibility. Education, in other words, proceeds upon hypotheses which seemingly do not transcend the world of common experience, whereas religion, some assert, proceeds upon such hypotheses. When we examine the matter carefully, however, from a strictly logical standpoint it is seen that there is really no difference between religion and education as practical activities of our human social life, and that there is as little ground for rejecting the one as the other, because we cannot demonstrate the objective validity of its presuppositions. In other words, the scientific man has exactly the same grounds for a practical faith in the individual and social efficacy of religion as of education. As long as no question is raised as to the objective validity of the concepts of religion, the scientific man, as a scientific man, is entitled to believe in religion in the same sense in which he believes in education; and that, as has already been said, not half-heartedly, but even enthusiastically. This is, of course, not saying that the scientific man should be expected to stultify himself by disbelieving in the metaphysical concepts of religion while at the same time he believes in the practical social power and efficacy of religion. All that is here implied is rather the simple, well-known scientific doctrine that ultimate questions need never

be raised in passing scientific judgment upon any phenomenon. From the point of view of philosophy the question of the objective validity of the metaphysical postulates and presuppositions of religion may, of course, be important, but not from the standpoint of positive science; for science, from its very methods, could undertake no such inquiry. The question of the objective validity of religious concepts, in other words, need not necessarily be raised in order to pass judgment upon religion as a factor in individual and social life, nor to reach a practical faith in religion as a social agency.¹ The practical educationist rarely raises any question concerning the objective validity of the concepts with which he deals; so too, the practical religionist. Why then should the scientific man, as soon as he approaches the matter of religion, in so many instances, immediately insist on turning philosopher and raising questions as to the objective validity of the concepts of religion, and so befogging the whole issue as to the practical utility of religion in individual and social life?

The only answer to this question, unless we assume that the scientific mind has some peculiar vice in its nature, must be that the concepts of religion have puzzled the scientific man much more than the concepts of education. He is, in other words, more troubled to give any practical or positive scientific content to those concepts; and as they are phenomena of a sort which usually he has no methods of investigating, he is tempted to reject them altogether, and to ascribe to them only a negative significance. But the progress of modern science has made it possible to investigate even these phenomena of religious concepts by scientific methods, and to give them a positive scientific content. The negative attitude of scientific men toward religion, in other words, such as was common in the eighteenth century, is no longer justifiable today. That attitude might have been excusable in the eighteenth century, both because of lack of knowledge and lack

¹ The form of argument of those who take a negative attitude toward religion is usually somewhat as follows: Religion is superstition, because there is no proof of the objective validity of its concepts; but superstition is harmful to society; therefore, religion is harmful to society. These persons do not seem to realize that almost exactly the same form of argument could be used against morality, law, education, or any other regulative institution of society.

of scientific methods for the investigation of the phenomena in question. But today we can no longer say that either the knowledge or the methods for understanding religion practically and socially are lacking. Such students of religion as Starbuck,¹ Coe,² Pratt,³ Marshall,⁴ Ward,⁵ Patten,⁶ King,⁷ and Ames,⁸ to mention only a few among many, have laid bare for us the practical meaning and functioning in human life of religious beliefs and practices. It is not the purpose of this paper to add anything to what the above writers have said, but rather to recapitulate and summarize some of their ideas from a sociological point of view, in order to show the bearing of religion upon the social life of the present and its place in social evolution. Nor is it the purpose of this paper to discuss the intricacies of religious psychology, or the much-debated problems of religious origins, but rather to indicate as clearly as possible, with our present knowledge, the practical and psychological connections between religion and man's social life. To do this we must, however, get a clear conception of what religion is in its essence psychologically and sociologically.

What, then, is religion? We must, of course, distinguish between religion and religions. Like everything else in human life, religion has evolved, that is, changed with the changing conditions of man's cultural evolution. The various forms through which religion has passed by no means always give a clear indication of the nature of religion in itself. Just as education has passed through many forms, representing the many different stages and types of cultural evolution, so, likewise, has religion. Just as education has taken many forms which, from our present point of view, we would unhesitatingly condemn, so, too, has religion. Religion can be a power for evil, as well as for good, in man's life. Our only contention is that it is always a powerful

¹ *The Psychology of Religion.*

² *The Spiritual Life.*

³ *Psychology of Religious Belief.*

⁴ *Instinct and Reason.*

⁵ *Pure Sociology.*

⁶ *The Social Basis of Religion.*

⁷ *The Development of Religion.*

⁸ *The Psychology of Religious Experience.* Among the very recent works touching upon the connections of religion and social life are Leuba's *Psychological Study of Religion* and Miss Harrison's *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion.*

factor, and one which, like education, can scarcely be dispensed with in the more complex stages of social evolution, even though it may be made to serve the evil, as well as the good, in human life. None of the forms of religion which we find in human history is essential to religion as such, and undoubtedly religion has not yet attained its complete development any more than education has yet reached its complete development. However, just as there are certain fundamentals in education which are possibly settled, or in a process of settlement, so also there are certain fundamentals in religion which men may agree upon, for all practical purposes, as settled or in the process of settlement. Our enthusiasm for the evolutionary point of view should not, of course, prevent us from seeing that there are certain truths in science, religion, education, and government, which we may accept as fundamentals upon which to build.

Neither must one confuse religion with theology and mythology. Theologies and mythologies are products of religion in interaction with man's reason and imagination, but they are not themselves religion. Theological creeds may possibly be an essential part of religion in certain stages of its evolution, but religions have often existed without any well-defined theological creeds. Theologies, as intellectual attempts at the interpretation of religion, appear and disappear; but religion remains. It would be a gross error, therefore, to confuse the social effects of religion with the social effects of theological creeds.

How shall we, then, define religion in its essence, as distinct from its specific historic forms on the one hand, and from theology and mythology on the other? Tylor's celebrated definition of religion, in its lowest terms, as "belief in spiritual beings" points the way to a true conception of religion. We must remember, however, that man has always counted himself a spiritual being. Religion, therefore, not only includes man's belief in spiritual life outside of himself, but also man's belief in his own spiritual life; it implies not only an attitude on man's part toward external objects, but also an attitude toward himself. Practically, therefore, religion is *belief in the reality of spiritual life*. It is essentially an emotional, a valuing, attitude toward the universe; it is the

attitude which projects mind, spirit, life into all things. Religion is, therefore, a mental attitude which finds the essential values of human personality and society in the universe as a whole, or, as in the lower religions, in material objects. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose from this description that religion is simply animistic philosophy. This is a view which is often upheld by scientific men who take a negative attitude toward religion. Thus, according to Guyau,¹ religion is simply crude, popular philosophy, "simply a mythical and sociomorphic theory of the universe," which will pass away with the growth of science. Comte is also frequently represented as implying a similar view in his celebrated law of the three states of man's intellectual conceptions; namely, the law that in the first or primitive state man was theological in his conceptions; in the second or transitional state, metaphysical, while in the third or final state he will be wholly scientific. But Comte was at considerable pains in his later life himself to refute this interpretation of his philosophy. Comte's view was that, while man would more and more give up his primitive, anthropomorphic way of viewing things, he would not thereby become less religious, only his religion would become of a more scientific, and so of a more purely subjective, character.

Even if we define religion in terms of belief, it is evident that it is much more than a philosophy, a way of looking at things. It is rather an attitude of the will and of the emotions. *It is primarily a valuing attitude.* Perhaps emotion is the most vivid conscious element in distinctly religious states of mind, and Haeckel's characterization of religion as "cosmic emotion" is not without psychological value. At any rate, religion in all its forms involves an emotional attitude toward the universe, especially toward the unknown powers or agencies which are believed to be behind its phenomena. Practically, therefore, religion is a desire to come into right relations with these unknown powers or agencies.² Hence the "sense of dependence" in religion, which many thinkers since Schleiermacher have thought to be its principal element. The object of nearly all religious practices, whether savage or

¹ In his *Non-Religion of the Future*.

² Cf. Howerth, *Work and Life*, chap. xii, especially p. 264.

civilized, is help, either personal or social; or, as Ward says, "The primary purpose of religion was at the beginning and has always remained salvation," that is, safety in both a social and personal sense. Hence the element in religion of opposition to evils which are believed to be removable in some spiritual way. Religious feeling is, therefore, most profoundly experienced in situations in which the need of help is felt, and in which it is believed that such help can come only from some superhuman source. Thus religious emotion is, usually and normally, profoundly experienced in the presence of death; but it may arise in any situation whatsoever when we look at life or things from the spiritual standpoint, that is, believing in the reality of spiritual things. Thus in the modern world religious emotion is frequently experienced most profoundly in some form of humanitarian work.

If this brief psychological description of religion is at all correct, then it is evident that religion springs from the whole nature of man. The simplest description of religion implies man's self-consciousness, his consciousness of himself as a conscious or spiritual being, over against the rest of the universe, with its unknown powers and agencies. Undoubtedly, the fact that man is the only religious animal is, therefore, to be connected with his self-consciousness and his powers of abstract thought and of reasoning. It is impossible to conceive of man developing these higher intellectual powers without developing religion at the same time. But religion is equally rooted in man's instincts and emotions as much as in his intellectual life. The practical trend of all religion toward social and self-preservation, toward personal and group safety, is sufficient evidence of this, though all the other characteristics of religion which we have just mentioned point in the same direction. Given, then, the intellectual, emotional, and instinctive nature of man, religion inevitably arises as soon as man tries to take a valuing attitude toward his universe, no matter how small and mean that universe may be.

If religion from the psychological standpoint is primarily a set of values, how is it that these values come to function socially? The reply is that religious values are built up socially; they are products, not of one individual mind, but of the collective mental

life of a group. They are built up, in other words, through mental interaction, become a part of the common store of ideas of a group, and are transmitted by tradition from generation to generation. Almost any religious concept will illustrate this. Let us take, for example, the concept of god. When we examine the concept of god we find that invariably it is built up from social experiences. In its earliest stages of development the idea of the divinity represents crudely some particular personal trait or character which is valued. At a later date the idea stands for an ideal of personal character which has been peculiarly appreciated by the group, such as that of the character of an ancestor or a king. But the god is always thought of as a *socius*, as a member of the group. The values found in the god-concept, in other words, are always those which have been derived from social experiences of one sort or another. As Professor Ames says, "The growth and objectification of the god goes hand in hand with the social experience and achievements of the nation." This is well illustrated by the religious history of the Hebrew people. Their concept of Yahweh gradually expanded from that of a tribal national god of patriarchal and king-like character, who was lord of the tribal hosts, to that of a universal deity, father of all the nations of the earth, possessing not only the attributes of patriarch, but also those of a social redeemer and savior. Nearly all of these values, which came to be attached to the god-concept among the Hebrews, were directly derived, it may be added, from the social experience involved in the Hebrew family life. The concept of god thus in time comes to represent the ideal of personal character, while the concept of "the will of god" stands for all the values connected with the social order to which the group attaches importance. It may be here suggested that the reason why the Greeks failed to develop a high concept of god, while the Hebrews did, was because Greek social and national life never presented the unity and harmony which the social life of the Hebrews did at its best, though, of course, we must not forget the part played by the so-called genius of the two peoples, the genius of the Greeks being primarily artistic, while the genius of the Hebrews was primarily social and moral.

Any religious concept other than that of the deity will represent equally well the fact that such concepts are primarily and psychologically projections of social values. Thus the concept of the immortality of the soul, which we find more or less developed in all religions, is unquestionably social in its content. The idea that death does not end all, but that personality lives on, permits at once an indefinite extension of all social and moral values. The justice, or even the revenge, which could not be realized in the present world will be achieved in the existence beyond the grave. Self-seeking, pessimism, despair, and all other enemies of the social order are thus put to flight, while disinterested service, faith, and hope are encouraged because they will receive their reward in the life beyond. The pictures of heaven, or of the abode of the righteous, which we find among both barbarous and civilized peoples, are nearly always pictures of ideal societies, the social ideal, of course, expanding with the growth of the social life of the people.

Again, the concepts of personal responsibility and of individual freedom in working out one's own destiny, which we so generally find associated with religion, are clearly social values. Social groups could scarcely exist without the inculcation to some extent of the doctrines of personal freedom and responsibility. So we might go on with a whole list of religious concepts, and we should find no difficulty in showing that psychologically they are socially derived; that they are projections of social values; and that their main function is social. As Professor Ames says, in effect, religion is identified with the most intimate and vital phases of social consciousness, that is, the consciousness of groups of the continuity and solidarity of their life. "The ideal values of each age," he says, "and of each type of social development tend to reach an intensity, a volume, and a symbolic expression which are religious." He concludes, therefore, that "religion is participation in the ideal values of the social consciousness," a conclusion which our argument has already foreshadowed.¹

¹ *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 356. This narrower, sociological definition is, of course, not in conflict with the broader definition earlier given of religion as "belief in the reality of spiritual life," since such belief is the basis upon which

Now, man everywhere, and civilized man in particular, seeks to control his conduct by a series of conscious values. Some of these values are, of course, peculiarly individualistic, or hedonistic, as we say, that is, they are based upon individual feelings of pleasure or pain. Other values, however, are more objective and social. They come to the individual through tradition or are impressed upon the individual through various forms of social pressure. Moral and religious values are particularly of the latter type; they are elaborated, in other words, not so much through individual feeling experiences, as through experiences as to social or group safety and ideals. They come, therefore, as already has been said, to the individual very largely from the group, either through handing down from the past, or through the pressure of the consensus of opinion and sentiment in the group. It is almost unnecessary to argue for the close connection, psychologically and sociologically, of religion and morality. Theoretically, to be sure, they are separable. Morality has its beginnings in custom, and still further back, perhaps, in instinct, while religion had its beginnings in self-consciousness, in man's consciousness of himself as a spiritual being. The moral standards of low civilizations, therefore, may not be greatly in advance of the actual social life, but through intellectual development and especially through the stimulus of religious ideas, moral ideals of a higher sort gradually develop. These ideals, as we have already said, tend to reach in turn an intensity and symbolic expression which are essentially religious. On the other hand, there cannot be reverence or worship of a divinity without implications of obligation; but, as we have already seen, the idea of the divinity itself has been developed essentially through social experience. Hence religious obligations easily become social obligations. Thus, even in the lowest forms of animism and

all faith in ideal values rests. The broader definition looks at religion from the standpoint of the universal (human) subject, the narrower regards religion as functioning in the social life. A definition of religion suggested by Professor Giddings, "faith in the possibilities of life," is essentially identical also with the broader definition, since practically the "faith" is in the efficacy and triumph of the spiritual elements in life. Such psychological definitions have the merit of bringing out clearly the fact that religion is much more than a mere cultural or "social" product; that it is rooted in the whole biological and psychological nature of man.

fetishism, we frequently find already quite fully developed implications of social obligation. From the very method of their psychic and social development, therefore, religious beliefs become early entangled with moral standards and ideals. Moreover, from a social standpoint, there is need for moral ideals of a sanction which is universal, and that sanction can be found only in the belief in the reality and universality of spiritual values. Such a belief is, however, essentially religious. The interdependence of morality and religion, from both the psychological and sociological standpoints, is, therefore, scarcely to be doubted.

Now, the great social significance of religion is, of course, to be found in the support which religion has given in all stages of human culture to custom, moral standards, and moral ideals. For the masses of every civilization moral ideals have gotten their chief sanction, their vital hold, from religion. While we are not warranted in affirming that morality of a high type cannot exist in individuals without religious beliefs of some sort, for that would leave out the influence of inborn tendencies and of habit upon human nature, yet we can say that practically morality has never subsisted in human society without religious sanctions. Let us examine, however, this matter a little more closely, and when we understand exactly the functions of religion in human society, we shall see more clearly the close connection between the two.

There is first of all the conservative influence of religion upon the social life. In all ages and among all peoples religion has been a powerful instrument of social control, because it adds a supernatural sanction to conduct. It would be a great mistake to suppose that primitive institutions, to any extent, had their origin in religious beliefs or sentiments, as their origin is undoubtedly to be found mainly in the human instincts and in the necessities of the conditions of life; but everywhere in primitive society, after institutions of a certain type have been established, we find that religion comes in to sanction them and to give them through its sanction great stability. Religious values commonly attach themselves in such early society to habits of action which have been found to be safe and to conduce to individual and group welfare. They reinforce the habits and so also the institutions founded upon

them. Thus, practically all institutions of later savagery, barbarism, and lower civilization are surrounded and imbedded, as it were, in religious sanctions. So religion becomes the great means of social control in these societies, sometimes consciously used as such by a priest class, more often, however, a means of control which is exercised by the group as a whole quite unconsciously. Here comes in, however, the great danger in religion, that it may become an impediment to progress and an instrument of class oppression. For when a religious sanction becomes attached to an institution, it often becomes very difficult to secure changes in the institution even when conditions demand them. Thus human sacrifice, polygamy, slavery, and practically all other institutions which we now detest have at one time or other received the sanction of religion, and when so sanctioned (as, e.g., polygamy) they are doubly difficult to uproot. The only conclusion that we can reach is that religious values or sanctions may attach themselves to any existing institutions, and by so doing they render them much more stable, and so also the whole social order.

This conservative function of religion in the social life has been perceived by practically all sociologists, but the theory of religion advocated by the late Professor Lester F. Ward states it most clearly.¹ According to Ward, "religion is the substitute among rational beings for instinct among irrational beings"; just as instinct works for a static condition of life, so religion works for a stationary condition of society. This is due to the fact that religion itself is a sort of vague sense of race or social safety, Ward thinks. In rational or reflective beings, he says, there is an antagonism between feeling and function. Feeling tends in rational beings to variations in conduct which are not in accord with race or group safety. Hence, religion has evolved, according to Ward, as a purely natural, half-instinctive device to restrict the demands of feeling, which would hurry the race, if not the individual, to destruction. "Without the religious check," Ward says, "the human race would have been borne to destruction by the extravagant vagaries of unbridled reason." Thus Ward conceives of both feeling and

¹ See his article on "The Essential Nature of Religion" in *The International Journal of Ethics*, VIII, 169-92.

reason as essentially individualistic, needing the restraint of some ultra-rational force such as religion. This is, also, essentially the theory which was advocated by Benjamin Kidd in his *Social Evolution*. Ward concludes that religion may be called "the social instinct"; that its mission in society is to conserve existing institutions; and that its highest word is, "thou shalt not."

Such a view of religion is, of course, partial and one-sided, but it is remarkable in that it came from a scientist whose presuppositions are those of materialistic monism. Ward's description of religion, however, applies with greater accuracy to the lower types of religion than to the higher types. There can be no question, however, but that the conservative tendencies of all religion are strong, and that progressive and idealistic religions are extremely rare in human history, taking it as a whole. However, religion is not of necessity merely conservative in its influence in human society. Whether it is conservative or not altogether depends upon the type of moral ideals which it sanctions. In higher religions, at any rate, we can plainly enough see the inherent tendency to favor social progress. The very fact that these religions have for the most part gotten their ideals from the family life, such as, for example, the ideal of brotherhood, makes them intimately connected with all forms of social idealism; for social and moral ideals come from the intimate, personal forms of association. Moreover, the connection between religion and social idealism is seen in the individual especially clearly at the period of adolescence, which is usually not only a period of natural idealism, but also of strong religious emotions. The concepts of religion, such as those of God, the immortality of the soul, and personal responsibility, which are themselves social ideals, as we have seen, become, when sufficiently worked out, the psychological basis in the normal human individual for social idealism, simply because they project and universalize social values. Religion thus becomes not only a reaction against social degeneration, as Patten says, but a support for utopian social ideals, utopian, that is, in the sense that they have never yet been even approximately realized in human society. Religion is always participation in the ideal values of the social life. If these ideal values are conservative, then of course religion itself becomes

conservative and even a stumbling-block to all progress. On the other hand, if the ideal values of a community are progressive, then its religion, too, will be progressive and may even become the very highest instrument of progress.

The significance of religion in cultural and social evolution must now be manifest, and the reason why the history of a certain type of culture is frequently the history of a particular religion becomes evident. Cultural evolution is possible only through the continuity of ideas and of social values in human society. Civilization, in other words, is made possible by handing down from age to age certain ideas and certain social values. Now it is religion which has hitherto given particular value to the social ideas and social ideals which are handed down. Not only that, but through its peculiar sanctions religion has made it possible easily to enforce the claims of these ideas and social values upon the individual. It has been, in other words, one of the chief instruments by which the individual has been gotten to conform his habits to the group, and to control his conduct in accordance with social demands. The question remains, however, whether human society cannot dispense with religious means of social control in the future, as many philosophers have thought. But it is evident that as human society becomes more complex the need of social control over the individual's habits, conduct, and ideals becomes greater instead of less. The more complex civilizations, in other words, have greater need, on the whole, of the control which religious ideals afford over the conduct of individuals than the less complex. The matter is not, however, one wholly of the mere complexity of civilization, because the civilizations which we call higher emphasize more the value of purely spiritual elements, that is, the value of things which can have no selfish or material import to the individual, but whose import is entirely in the realm of ideal social values. Now, as we have already said, religion is the participation in the ideal values of the social consciousness. It is the fullest activity, in other words, of the spiritual life in man. The supreme rôle of religion, therefore, in the higher stages of human culture, is to enforce the claim to dominance in the life of man of the ideal social values. That is, it exalts the life in which the individual merges

his personal interests, desires, and aspirations with his group, or, as in the highest religion, with humanity as a whole. For this reason, so far as we can now see, the death of religion would mean the death of civilization, or, at least, of all the higher forms of civilization.

But if religion is participation in, and universalization of, the ideal values of the social consciousness, is there any danger that it will ever be destroyed? The reply is that there is danger from two sources. First there is danger from the animal impulses of human nature. Civilization is at best a very fragile affair, simply because it rests upon certain ideal social values. There is a strong, insistent tendency in man, whenever these ideal values lose their grip, to return to the animal level of existence; that is, there is a strong tendency in human nature to be satisfied with sensual pleasures, with mere material things which can be enjoyed. Materialistic standards of life and happiness are therefore inimical to religion in all its higher phases, as has usually been seen by religious leaders. The other great danger to religion is negative philosophy, a way of looking at things, in other words, which denies the reality of the spiritual element in human life. Materialistic or mechanistic monism, with its negation of the spiritual element in life, must be considered hostile to religion, even though not all of its advocates so regard it. Mechanistic monism is hostile to religion because it denies either the existence or the efficacy of a spiritual or teleological element in the universe, and even the practical efficacy of conscious values in the individual life. On the other hand, science cannot rightly be regarded as hostile to religion. It is only when science, by its teachings, tends to support either practical, materialistic standards of life or a negative philosophy that it may become hostile to religion. There may be, of course, and often has been, an antagonism between science and systems of theology, but this, as was said at the beginning, must not be thought to imply any necessary antagonism between religion and science. Science becomes antagonistic to religion only in proportion as it tends to transform itself into mechanistic monism, and to set up the negations of such materialism as a guide to practical life. To be sure, science has of recent years showed some tendency, in the hands of some of its adherents, to transform itself into a universal

materialistic or mechanistic philosophy; but it may be safely said that in proportion as science does this it loses its truly scientific character. The so-called antagonism between religion and science must therefore be resolved into the antagonism of certain scientific men to religion. It cannot be regarded as in any sense an inherent or necessary antagonism. On the other hand, the attitude of science toward religion must necessarily be one of constructive criticism. Just as the attitude of science toward systems of education is necessarily one of criticism for the sake of reconstructing and perfecting education, so should be the attitude of science toward religion. It is the business of science to criticize religion as an instrument of the social life, but not to attack its metaphysical postulates and presuppositions. This critical attitude of science toward religion is often misinterpreted as antagonism; but it is time that religion seeks and welcomes, in my opinion, the friendly criticisms of science. For between humanitarian science and humanitarian religion there can and will be no real antagonism.

What then shall we say of non-religious persons? If religion is participation in the ideal values of the social consciousness, why is it there are so many non-religious persons in present society? Of course we do not expect mentally deficient persons, born criminals, or even "the sporting type" to be truly religious. Neither do we expect those who are satisfied with purely materialistic and sensuous values to be strongly religiously inclined. But we find, besides these, highly intellectual people, specialists along certain scientific lines, as well as sometimes social and philanthropic workers, who declare that they have no religion. In many cases, of course, these people are simply confused regarding terms. They may mean that they do not accept any conventional theology, or else they may mean that they have given up their traditional religion, and have not yet successfully evolved in their own consciousness anything which they think worthy of the name of religion to take its place. In some cases, however, these non-religious persons are truly non-religious, because they have come to take, not only in theory, but also in practice, a negative attitude toward the spiritual element in life. They do not participate, in other words, in the ideal values of the consciousness of their social group,

because they have narrowed their own point of view and their own activities until that is impossible. We must, therefore, agree with Professor Ames,¹ that truly "non-religious persons are those who fail to enter vitally into a world of social activities and feelings. They are lacking in the sense of ideal values which constitutes the social conscience."

If religion is of such importance in the social life, if it is such a power for good or evil, then the question, what sort of religion can society afford to encourage, becomes one of vital interest. Just as there have been systems of education which have blocked all social progress, perpetuated abuses of power, and degraded and enslaved the masses, so there have been systems of religion which have done the same thing. If religion has not always worked to the highest social advantage in the past, so in the future it may possibly work to social disadvantage unless properly guided and controlled in its development. What religion does depends altogether upon the ideals which it champions. Modern society, therefore, needs a religion adapted to the requirements of modern life. Now, the great need, in my opinion, of modern civilization is a humanitarian ethics which will teach the individual to find his self development and his happiness in the unselfish service of others, and which will forbid any individual, class, nation, or even race from regarding itself as an end in itself apart from the rest of humanity. Only such an ethics can solve the social problem, or, for that matter, any of the problems which threaten our civilization with disintegration. But such an ethics, in order to be vital, must become a part of our religion. A humanitarian religion, for the reasons which we have already pointed out, is a necessary foundation and complement of a humanitarian ethics. Therefore the only religion which modern society can afford to encourage is a religion of humanity, a religion which will put the service of man above all other ends and values. Such a completely socialized religion placing the service of humanity above the service of any class, nation, or race may seem to some yet far in the future; and in a sense, this, of course, is true. Nevertheless, it must be added that Christianity thus far is the only religion, among the widespread religions of the earth, which has

¹ *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 369.

shown any tendency to become a true religion of humanity in the sense in which we have just used that phrase; and I would further add, as my own personal opinion, that Christianity rightly understood is, in its fundamental principles, essentially a religion of humanity. There can be no question, at any rate, but that its fundamental ethical doctrines are identical with the humanitarian ethics which we have just described.

A word in conclusion as to the social functions of the church. The church, as the institution organized to embody concretely the religious life in society, should, of course, be co-ordinate in importance with religion itself, for if religion is to be a vital influence in society, it must find concrete embodiment in some institution. But all human institutions, after they have reached a certain development, have an insidious tendency to forget the purposes for which they were organized, and to set themselves up as ends in and of themselves. Historically, of course, the Christian church has often done this. But in proportion as it has done so it has abdicated its true function. The church exists to serve the great interests of religion in society; that is, it exists to serve those ideal values for which religion stands. Therefore, the social function of the church is to conserve and propagate religious and moral ideals in society. Its great business is to enforce the demands of the spiritual life. In this work, of course, it may at times take up other activities than the teaching and propagation of moral ideals. It may undertake, for example, to head reform movements at times, to aid in the encouragement and development of philanthropy, or even to minister to men's economic and physical needs. But all of these activities are but side-issues to its great business of the conservation and development of moral and social ideals. I would say, therefore, that the primary function of the church is to be "an ethical culture society," if that phrase had not acquired such a narrow meaning in the minds of some that it might be misunderstood. At any rate, there can be no doubt that the church's main function is to stand for the claims of the spiritual life; and that as yet it is the only institution which has seriously charged itself with the conservation and propagation of moral and social ideals. Even though it has done its work at times very

imperfectly and faultily for the reasons already mentioned, it is evident that it still has a field of social usefulness in some respects greater and more important than that of any other human institution. The social reconstruction of the future must wait largely on the teaching and activities of the church; no other institution as yet, as has already been said, definitely undertakes to propagate moral and social ideals; and civilization depends not only for its further advance, but for its very existence, upon the propagation among the masses of ideal social values. Until, therefore, we have a church that is effective socially, law and government, science and education will not do much to give us a social life that is harmonious and truly progressive, or a human life that is moral and truly satisfying.